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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3580

Oregon has lost 24% of its estuary habitat since 1870, and up to 90% loss of eelgrass meadows has been observed in Coos Bay in recent years. The full extent of eelgrass loss remains unknown due to limited data, making conservation efforts more challenging. Beyond its ecological role, eelgrass sustains coastal economies, providing jobs in fisheries, tourism, aquaculture, and scientific research. It also holds cultural significance for coastal Tribal Nations, supporting traditional practices and food sources. Its ecological impact is vital as well: eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is a vital indicator of estuarine health, supporting biodiversity, fisheries, and coastal resilience. Healthy eelgrass meadows create nursery habitats for juvenile salmon, Dungeness crab, rockfish, and herring, ensuring the sustainability of Oregon's marine ecosystems. The Eelgrass Action Bill represents a crucial step toward protecting and restoring essential estuary habitats. By advancing research, monitoring, and conservation strategies, Oregon can ensure eelgrass meadows continue to support marine life, coastal communities, and climate adaptation efforts for generations to come.